



D.C. statehood approved by House as Senate fight looms

By ASHRAF KHALIL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A decades-long movement to reshape the American political map took a further step Thursday as the House of Representatives approved a bill to make the nation's capital the 51st state.

Approval came by a 216-208 vote along strict party lines. Republicans oppose the idea given that the new state would be overwhelmingly Democratic — and the proposal faces a far tougher road in the Senate, where even full Democratic support isn't guaranteed.

The legislation proposes creating a 51st state with one representative and two senators, while a tiny sliver of land including the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall would remain as a federal district. Instead of the District of Columbia, the new state would be known as Washington, Douglass Commonwealth — named after famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who lived in Washington from 1877 until his death in 1895.



In this April 21, 2021, photo, Del. Eleanor Holmes-Norton, D-D.C., center, joined from left by Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., speaks at a news conference ahead of the House vote on H.R. 51- the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

An identical statehood bill passed the House in 2020, but died in the then-Repub-

lican-controlled Senate. Now, with the 2020 elections leaving Democrats

controlling both chambers of Congress and the White House, Republican sena-

tors may resort to a filibuster to stymie the statehood bill.

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Continued from Front

The Senate is split 50/50 with Vice President Kamala Harris as the tie-breaker. But it takes 60 senators to break a concerted filibuster attempt. Senate Democrats could vote to tweak the filibuster rules and slip the statehood issue through a loophole — but that would require total unity and some moderate Democrats have expressed opposition to that strategy. Perennial swing vote and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia had already publicly stated that he will not vote to eliminate or weaken the filibuster. Manchin is also one of a handful of Democratic Senators who has not openly supported the D.C. statehood initiative.

For now, though, Democrats and statehood advocates are celebrating their House victory.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser tied the statehood issue to America's ongoing reckoning over police brutality and longstanding issues of racial injustice.

"This vote comes at a critical time when Americans nationwide are eager to deliver on the promise of liberty and justice for all," Bowser said in a statement. "For centuries, an incremental approach to equality in America has delayed this promise for too many. Now is the time for bold action."

Kentucky Republican Rep. James Comer called the measure "flatly unconstitutional."

"It won't withstand judicial scrutiny, but it will cause



In this April 21, 2021, photo, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., joins Del. Eleanor Holmes-Norton, D-D.C., left, at a news conference ahead of the House vote on H.R. 51, the Washington, DC Admission Act, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

massive confusion for years as it's reviewed by the courts," Comer said in a statement. "Democrats are pushing D.C. statehood to pack the U.S. Senate with two progressive senators so they can end the filibuster, pack the Supreme Court, enact the Green New Deal, and create the socialist utopia the Squad dreams about."

The bill received strong support from the White House, which has called Washington's current status "an affront to the democratic values on which our Nation was founded."

During Thursday floor debate, a succession of Republican representatives

decried it as a cynical and unconstitutional power-grab. The country's founding fathers, "never wanted D.C. to be a state and then specifically framed the constitution to say so," said Georgia Republican Rep. Jody Hice.

But Virginia Democratic Rep. Gerald Connolly pointed out that Kentucky was once a part of Virginia, and was carved out as a state by Congress.

Connolly argued that the federal district was a theoretical concept when first conceived, not a community with a higher population than two U.S. states.

"When the constitution was written, this place didn't ex-

ist," he said. "When people say this is not about race and partisanship, you can be sure it's about race and partisanship."

During a March hearing by the House oversight committee, GOP representatives claimed D.C. was unfit for statehood and proposed a variety of alternatives that included absolving Washingtonians from federal taxes and "retroceding" most of D.C. back into Maryland.

Opponents also contend that Congress lacks the authority to change D.C.'s status, despite every state other than the original 13 being admitted to the union via congressional vote.

Zack Smith, a legal fellow at the Heritage Institute, a conservative think tank, said the measure becoming law would unleash a wave of lawsuits.

"You're basically looking at a lot of litigation," Smith told The Associated Press. "Every legislative act of this

new state would be called into question. ... Things would be in a state of flux for years."

D.C. has long chafed under its relationship with Congress, which has the power to essentially veto or alter any local laws. Its population is larger than that of Wyoming or Vermont and its estimated 712,000 residents pay federal taxes, vote for president and serve in the armed forces, but they have no voting representation in Congress. The limitations of D.C.'s reality were put in stark relief last summer during a series of protests over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and against general police brutality. After a night of widespread vandalism, President Donald Trump usurped D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser's authority and called in a massive multiagency federal force to downtown. The law enforcement forces cleared peaceful protesters from a public street so Trump could pose for a photo outside a church.

Ravi Perry, head of Howard University's political science department, said the events of last summer were a crucial turning point for the perception of the D.C. statehood push, intertwining the issue with the country's ascendant racial justice movement.

As recently as 2018, nationwide polls had shown the majority of Americans to be lukewarm at best on the topic, but those poll numbers changed dramatically in the past two years, he said.

"People have started to see D.C. statehood as the racial justice issue that it is," said Perry, who is also on the board of the pro-statehood group D.C. Vote. "There's been a major sea change, and a lot of that has been motivated by Trumpism." □



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High court moves away from leniency for minors who murder

By JESSICA GRESKO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court made it easier Thursday to sentence minors convicted of murder to life in prison without the possibility of parole, a ruling that reflects a change in course driven by a more conservative group of justices.

In a dissent, a liberal justice accused her colleagues of gutting earlier decisions that said life without parole sentences for people under age 18 should be rare. The current case, which involved a Mississippi inmate and a crime committed when he was 15, asked the justices whether a minor has to be found to be "permanently incorrigible," incapable of being rehabilitated, before being sentenced to life without parole.

In a 6-3 decision that split the justices along ideological lines, the court said no. The ruling followed more than a decade in which the court moved gradually toward more leniency for minors convicted of murder.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, writing for the majority, said previous decisions only require a judge to consider "an offender's youth and attendant characteristics" before imposing a sen-



In this Oct. 7, 2020, file photo the Supreme Court in Washington. After more than a decade in which the Supreme Court moved gradually toward more leniency for minors convicted of murder, the justices have moved the other way.

Associated Press

tence of life without parole. Kavanaugh rejected a more demanding standard.

The "argument that the sentencer must make a finding of permanent incorrigibility is inconsistent with the Court's precedents," Kavanaugh wrote for himself and Chief Justice John Roberts, as well as Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett.

Justice Clarence Thomas agreed with the result but said he would have instead

rejected outright a 2016 decision in favor of the juveniles.

The court's three liberal justices dissented, with Justice Sonia Sotomayor writing that the decision "guts" prior cases in favor of minors. Sotomayor called the decision an "abrupt break" and an "abandonment" of those cases. Sotomayor said that all the almost 1,500 juvenile offenders serving life without parole sentences wanted was "the opportunity, at some point in their lives,

to show a parole board all they have done to rehabilitate themselves and to ask for a second chance."

Beginning in 2005, the Supreme Court had concluded in a series of cases that minors should be treated differently from adults, in part because of minors' lack of maturity. That year, the court eliminated the death penalty for juveniles. Five years later, it later barred life-without-parole sentences for juveniles except in cases of murder. In

2012 and 2016 the court again sided with minors. The court said life-without-parole sentences should only be given to "the rarest of juvenile offenders, those whose crimes reflect permanent incorrigibility."

Since that time, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose votes were key to those decisions, have been replaced by more conservative justices. Kavanaugh, the author of Thursday's majority opinion and a former clerk to Kennedy, replaced him on the court. Kennedy had been the author of the decisions favoring juveniles in 2005, 2010 and 2016.

The specific case before the justices involved Mississippi inmate Brett Jones, who was 15 and living with his grandparents when he fatally stabbed his grandfather. The two had a fight in the home's kitchen after Bertis Jones found his grandson's girlfriend in his grandson's bedroom. Brett Jones, who was using a knife to make a sandwich before the fight, stabbed his grandfather first with that knife and then, when it broke, with a different knife. He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. □

Housing agency ends Trump-era anti-transgender shelter rule

By ASHRAF KHALIL

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Housing and Urban Development is withdrawing a Trump-era policy that would have allowed taxpayer-funded homeless shelters to deny access to transgender people.

The move is partially symbolic; the proposed policy never truly took hold on the ground and was still being hotly debated last fall when former President Donald Trump lost his bid for reelection.

One of President Joe Biden's first actions after taking office was signing a Jan. 20 executive order on combating discrimination on the basis of gender identity

or sexual orientation. Biden directed every executive branch agency to examine further steps that could be taken to combat such discrimination.

"Access to safe, stable housing — and shelter — is a basic necessity," said new HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge. "Unfortunately, transgender and gender non-conforming people report more instances of housing instability and homelessness than cisgender people. Today, we are taking a critical step in affirming HUD's commitment that no person be denied access to housing or other critical services because of their gender identity."

The 2012 Equal Access

Rule bars federally funded housing programs from discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender identity. But under Trump and his housing secretary, Ben Carson, HUD proposed a modification to the rule that would have allowed single-sex homeless shelters to deny transgender people access.

Democratic Virginia Rep. Jennifer Wexton, who clashed publicly with Carson over the issue in 2019, hailed Thursday's announcement as an expected but necessary step to ensure protections for one of the country's vulnerable populations.

"It's a relief to see it officially withdrawn," Wexton said.



Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge testifies during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, April 20, 2021 in Washington.

Associated Press

"Housing saves lives, especially for the trans community who face disproportionate rates of violence and homelessness. HUD's

actions today will advance equality and protect the well-being of transgender Americans across the country." □

Report: Federal agents unprepared for Portland protests

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Hundreds of militarized federal agents who were deployed to Portland, Oregon, last summer to quell racial justice protests didn't have the proper training or equipment to deal with riots and there was no plan for operating without the help of local police, who were eventually ordered to stand down by the city, a federal investigative report has found.

Between June and August last year, 755 agents from within various agencies under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security were engaged in crowd control in Portland, which saw more than 100 consecutive days of often-violent protest after George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis, according to a report prepared by the department's Inspector General.

The recorded images of Floyd, a Black man, struggling to breathe as a white police officer pressed a knee on his neck for about nine minutes galvanized protests against police brutality and racial injustice in cities nationwide. The protests in Portland, which grew to focus on a



In this July 29, 2020, file photo, Federal officers arrest a demonstrator during a Black Lives Matter protest at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse in Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

federal courthouse in the central city, were particularly intense and drew the attention of former President Donald Trump, who repeatedly used the unrest as a law-and-order talking point in his divisive reelection campaign.

At a hearing before the House Homeland Security Committee on Wednesday, DHS Inspector General Joseph Cuffari said the

report out this week found the agency "did not properly exercise its authority" in Portland last summer.

"DHS was unprepared to effectively execute cross-component activities in Portland," he said. "Specifically, not all officers had completed required training, had the necessary equipment, or used consistent uniforms, devices, and operational tactics."

The deployment, which began June 4, had cost \$12.3 million by August 31 while damage to Portland's federal courthouse was estimated at roughly \$1.6 million, the report found. The agents deployed to Portland were from an alphabet soup of agencies, including the Federal Protective Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement and the U.S. Secret Service.

The investigation surveyed the training provided to the 222 federal agents deployed to Portland as of Aug. 7 and determined that 36 did not complete training on criminal violations on federal property, which subjected DHS to increased liability. Fourteen of the 36 who lacked adequate training deployed less-lethal devices and munitions, the report found.

The department also did not designate federal agents with authority by name, as previously recommended, and not all agents who were sent to Portland had taken recertification courses in the use of less-lethal munitions they used, including pepper ball guns and various types of concussive grenades and smoke bombs.

"Deploying officers who are not properly trained increases the risk of officers acting outside of their authority. Officers who used force in Portland without evidence of ... cross-designation training presented an even greater risk of liability to DHS," the Inspector General wrote. □

Man whose NYC subway pipe-bomb fizzled gets life in prison



This undated file photo provided by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission shows Akayed Ullah, who was convicted of terrorism charges for setting off a pipe bomb in New York City's busiest subway station.

Associated Press

By **LARRY NEUMEISTER and TOM HAYS**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge

sentenced a Bangladeshi immigrant to life in prison Thursday, saying he plotted to carry out a "barbaric and heinous" plot to kill as many people as he could with a suicide bombing attack in New York City's subway beneath Times Square in 2017.

Akayed Ullah, 31, was sentenced in Manhattan federal court by Judge Richard J. Sullivan, who said Ullah had carried out "about as serious a crime as there is," though he largely failed when the bomb attached to his chest barely exploded, burning him severely but largely sparing those around him from severe injuries.

"A life sentence is appropriate," Sullivan said. "It was a truly barbaric and heinous crime."

The judge told the would-

be suicide bomber that life in prison was "less draconian than the sentence you were going to impose on yourself."

Ullah, 31, speaking through a white mask over his black beard and with his tearful mother looking on from a courtroom bench behind him, apologized before hearing the sentence.

"Your honor, what I did on Dec. 11, it was wrong," he said. "I can tell you from the bottom of my heart, I'm deeply sorry. ... I do not support harming innocent people."

Prosecutors had sought the life term for Ullah, saying the "premeditated and vicious" attack was committed on behalf of the Islamic State group.

But defense lawyer Amy Gallicchio said Ullah deserved no more than the

mandatory 35 years in prison. She said he had "lived lawfully and peacefully" before the December 2017 attack that she blamed on a "personal crisis that left him isolated, depressed, vulnerable and suicidal."

"He's not an evil man. He is not a monster," she said.

The attack in a pedestrian tunnel beneath Times Square and the Port Authority bus terminal left Ullah seriously burned but spared some pedestrians nearby from more serious injuries, though the government noted that one bystander has lost 70% of his hearing.

At trial, prosecutors showed jurors Ullah's post-arrest statements and social media comments, including when he taunted then-President Donald Trump on Facebook before the at-

tack.

Hours after Ullah's bombing attempt, Trump derided the immigration system that had allowed Ullah — and multitudes of law-abiding Bangladeshis — to enter the U.S.

Ullah got an entry visa in 2011 because he had an uncle who was already a U.S. citizen. Trump said allowing foreigners to follow relatives to the U.S. was "incompatible with national security."

Sullivan's sentence was formally described as life in prison plus 30 years because one count required that a 30-year mandatory sentence be added to whatever was imposed for the other charges. The judge, who now sits on the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, also ordered \$7,380 in restitution. □

Russia orders troop pullback but keeps weapons near Ukraine

By **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's defense minister on Thursday ordered troops back to their permanent bases following massive drills amid tensions with Ukraine, but said they should leave their weapons behind in western Russia for another exercise later this year.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the Russian pullback along their border.

After watching the drills, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared the maneuvers in Crimea and wide swathes of western Russia over and ordered the military to pull the troops that took part in them back to their permanent bases.

"I consider the goals of the snap check of readiness fulfilled," Shoigu said. "The troops have shown their capability to defend the country and I decided to complete the drills in the South and Western military districts." Shoigu said the troops should return to their bases by May 1, but



Russian paratroopers load into a plane for airborne drills during maneuvers in Taganrog, Russia, Thursday, April 22, 2021.

he ordered their heavy weapons kept in western Russia for another massive military exercise. The weapons were remaining at the Pogonovo firing range in the southwestern Voronezh region 160 kilometers (100 miles) east of the border with Ukraine.

The Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that came amid increasing violations of a cease-fire in war-torn eastern Ukraine raised concerns in the West, which urged the Kremlin to pull its forces back.

The U.S. and NATO have said the Russian buildup

near Ukraine was the largest since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and threw its support behind separatists in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. Ukraine's president applauded the Russian troops' pullback.

"The reduction of troops

on our border proportionally reduces tension," Zelenskyy said on Twitter. He noted that Ukraine remains vigilant but "welcomes any steps to decrease the military presence and de-escalate the situation in Donbas." Earlier this week, Zelenskyy offered to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Donbas to defuse tensions.

Putin responded in televised remarks Thursday, saying if the Ukrainian leadership wants to settle the conflict in Donbas, it should first engage in talks with separatist leaders there and only after that discuss it with Russia. If Zelenskyy wants to discuss normalizing ties with Russia, he's welcome to come to Moscow, the Russian leader said. The Russian military hasn't reported the number of additional troops that had been moved to Crimea and parts of southwestern Russia near Ukraine, and it wasn't immediately clear from Shoigu's statement if all of them will now be pulled back. □

Associated Press

U.S. troops in Afghanistan begin packing gear in pullout prep

By **KATHY GANNON**

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The U.S. military has begun shipping equipment and winding down contracts with local service providers ahead of the May 1 start of the final phase of its military pullout from Afghanistan, a U.S. Defense Department official said Thursday.

The pullout under U.S. President Joe Biden marks the end of America's longest war after a 20-year military engagement. Currently, some 2,500 U.S. soldiers and about 7,000 allied forces are still in Afghanistan. In February last year, the U.S. military began closing its smaller bases. In mid-April, the Biden administration announced that the final phase of the withdrawal would begin May 1 and be completed before Sept. 11.

Since then, the military has

been shipping equipment and winding down local contracts for services such as trash pickup and maintenance work, the U.S. official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations.

While preparations are under way, troops likely won't begin to depart for a few

weeks, he said, adding that "we won't see a coming down of the (troop) numbers" until remaining bases close. There have been indications that the pullout could be completed well before Sept. 11, which marks the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaida terror attack on the U.S. and the trigger for the U.S. inva-

sion of Afghanistan.

On Wednesday, Germany's Defense Ministry said discussions are underway among military planners with the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Kabul for a possible withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan as early as July 4. In the short term, America will likely increase its troop presence in Afghanistan, the Pentagon said last Friday. The additional troops would be in Afghanistan over the coming weeks and months to help with what the herculean task of wrapping up 20 years of war.

While much of the equipment headed back to the U.S. will be shipped by air, the military will also use land routes through Pakistan and north through Central Asia, the Defense Department official said. The U.S. equipment that is neither shipped back to

America nor given to the Afghan National Security forces will be sold to contractors, who will, in turn, sell it in the local markets. "You'll most likely start seeing it eventually showing up in bazaars as scrap," said the official.

The Taliban, meanwhile, were non-committal when asked by the AP whether the insurgents would attack departing U.S. and NATO troops. "It's too early for these issues, nothing can be said about the future," said Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem. In a deal the Taliban signed last year with former President Donald Trump, the final U.S. withdrawal deadline was set as May 1. Under the agreement, the Taliban promised not to attack U.S. and NATO troops but they also later promised "consequences" if Washington defied the May 1 deadline. □



In this April 14, 2021 file photo, President Joe Biden speaks from the Treaty Room in the White House about the withdrawal of the remainder of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

Associated Press

Israel says Syrian missile was not aimed at nuclear reactor

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military said Thursday that a Syrian missile that reached deep into Israeli territory and set off air raid sirens near the country's top-secret nuclear reactor was the result of a misfire and not a deliberate attack.

The missile landed in southern Israel early Thursday, prompting Israel to respond with airstrikes on the missile launcher and other targets in Syria.

The army's chief spokesman, Brig. Gen. Hidai Zilberman, was quoted as telling military correspondents that the Israeli air force was already operating in Syrian airspace when the anti-aircraft missile was fired. He said the projectile, identified as a Russian-made SA-5 missile, missed its target and exploded in southern Israel.

The missile, also known as an S200, set off air raid sirens in a village near Dimona, the southern desert town where Israel's nuclear reactor is located, and some 300 kilometers (200 miles) south of Damascus. "There was no intention of



This file image made from a video aired Friday, Jan. 7, 2005, by Israeli television station Channel 10, shows what the television station claims is Israel's top secret nuclear facility in the southern Israeli town of Dimona, the first detailed video of the site ever shown to the public.

Associated Press

hitting the nuclear reactor in Dimona," Zilberman was quoted as saying.

An Israeli missile-defense system tried but failed to intercept the incoming missile. Defense Minister Benny Gantz said the incident was under investigation.

In Washington, Gen. Frank

McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, gave a similar assessment to the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

"I think it reflects, actually, incompetence in Syrian air defense, where they were responding to Israeli strikes on targets in Syria. The fired

their missiles, the missiles went ballistic, literally, and followed a parabolic trajectory to Israel," he said. "I do not believe it was an intentional attack, but just rather a lack of capability on the part of the Syrian air defenders." In recent years, Israel has repeatedly

launched air strikes at Syria, including at military targets linked to foes Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, both allies of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Such strikes routinely draw Syrian anti-aircraft fire. Thursday's exchange was unusual because the Syrian projectile landed deep inside Israel. Syria's state news agency SANA said the exchange began with an Israeli air strike on Dumeir, a suburb of the capital, Damascus. Dumeir is believed to house Syrian army installations and batteries as well as bases and weapons depots belonging to Iran-backed militias. SANA said four soldiers were wounded.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group based in Britain that tracks Syria's civil war, said the Israeli strikes hit an air defense base belonging to the Syrian military and destroyed air defense batteries in the area. It said the Syrian military fired surface-to-air missiles in response. Syrian media made no mention of an anti-aircraft missile landing deep inside Israel. □

Malnutrition rising in Mozambique amid extremist insurgency

By ANDREW MELDRUM

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Mozambique's humanitarian crisis from the extremist insurgency in the country's north is rapidly spiraling, with more than 950,000 people in urgent need of food aid, the U.N. World Food Program said Thursday.

An estimated 50,000 people fled their homes amid the rebels' five-day siege of Palma earlier this month, swelling the numbers of displaced and hungry.

"People have scattered in many different directions since the recent attacks in Palma. Survivors are traumatized. They've had to flee, leaving behind all their belongings,

and families have been separated," said Antonella Daprile, WFP's country director in Mozambique, who visited Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado province, where many of the displaced have sought safety.

"We met a young mother who fled the violence with her two daughters. They walked for three days without food or water and have no idea whether the rest of their family survived," Daprile said.

Many have fled to Pemba on boats, making a treacherous trip in stormy seas, and thousands are still trapped in Palma and the nearby settlement of Quitunda. WFP said it is delivering food to those

areas as well as to coastal islands.

"This is the rainy season, the cyclone season, and northern Mozambique is in the eye of the storm," said Shelley Thakral, WFP's regional spokesperson for southern Africa. "I saw families huddled under flimsy tarpaulins for shelter."

Many of the displaced in Mozambique have been taken in by other families, who are already poor. The host families are also experiencing hunger, aid workers said.

Children are worst affected by the rising rates of malnutrition. Almost 21% of displaced children under 5, and 18% of children of host families, are under-



Displaced women and children wait for assistance at a building used by refugees as shelter in Pemba, Mozambique, after they fled attacks in Palma in Northern Mozambique, Monday April 19, 2021.

Associated Press

weight, according to a recent survey by UNICEF and WFP.

The rates of chronic malnutrition, which has lifelong consequences, are at an alarming 50% of displaced children and 41% of children from host communities, according to the sur-

vey.

WFP's emergency food distributions provide rations to feed a family for two weeks with supplies of high-energy biscuits, rice, pulses, vegetable oil, water, and canned foods such as sardines and beans. □

Mexican president pushes controversial reforestation plan

By MARTIN ZETINA and FA-BIOLA SÁNCHEZ
Associated Press

KOPOMA, México (AP) — Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador made a strong push Thursday for his oft-questioned tree-planting program, trying to get the United States on board to fund a massive expansion of the program into Central America as a way to stem migration. López Obrador pitched his "Planting Life" program, which aims to plant 1 billion fruit and timber trees, to U.S. President Joe Biden at Thursday's climate change summit.

López Obrador claims the program can help prevent farmers from leaving their land and migrating to the United States, though he also proposed that the U.S. grant six-month work visas, and eventually citizenship, to those who participate in the program.

But environmentalists question whether planting big swaths of commercial species — sometimes on land that held native forests — is a good idea and opinions are mixed in Mexico on whether the program is really working, or whether it



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador gets a shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine for COVID-19 during his daily, morning news conference at the presidential palace in Mexico City, Tuesday, April 20, 2021.

Associated Press

can offset Mexico's other policy of encouraging the use of fossil fuels.

"You, President Biden, can finance the Planting Life program in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador," López Obrador said during Thursday's videoconference session of the summit. "The proposal is that we extend this program to southeastern Mexico and Central America, to plant

3 billion more trees and create 1.2 million jobs."

The program has already planted 700,000 trees in Mexico, where it pays 450,000 Mexican farmers a stipend of about \$225 per month to tend the saplings. That is popular among farmer in dry towns like Kopoma, in Yucatan state, where highly seasonal rainfall makes the tree program a vital stopgap for farmers

like Roberto Cocom Caamal, 72.

In the dry season, he and 69 communal farmers in Kopoma can tend the saplings they get from army-run nurseries on a 426-acre (172.5 hectare) plot they enrolled in the program. During the rainy season, he and other Maya farmers can also plant traditional food crops.

It has "opened up new

possibilities to survive," Cocom Caamal said of the program, which currently has a budget of about \$1.4 billion and operates in 20 of Mexico's 32 states.

It was unclear how serious López Obrador's visa proposal was, or his interest in the climate change summit: He didn't listen to most of the other 40 leaders who spoke at the summit, instead carrying on with his daily news conference.

But Diego Pérez Salicrup, a biologist and researcher at Mexico's National Autonomous University, expressed reservations about how the program is really working or whether it can be extended to the different farming, climate and environmental conditions in Central America.

"We are not trying to demonize it, but we also aren't saying that it has been a resounding success," said Pérez Salicrup.

Some critics have suggested that farmers with marginal or unprofitable natural woodlands have simply cut them down in order to plant new trees and qualify for the monthly stipend under the reforestation program. □

Catholic officials halt activity in Haiti for 9 kidnapped

By EVENS SANON
Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — Roman Catholic institutions including schools and universities closed Wednesday across Haiti in a three-day protest to demand the release of five priests, two nuns and two other people kidnapped more than a week ago amid a spike in violence that the government is struggling to control.

Catholic officials also organized Masses to pray for those kidnapped at least two of whom are French as they tolled the bells at noon at St. Pierre church in Pétienville, where hundreds gathered to show their support. "No one is safe," said 65-year-old Margaret Jean Louis. "I'm hoping the people kid-



An elderly man walks inside the Sacre Coeur of Turgeau Catholic church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, April 21, 2021.

Associated Press

napped will make it out safely." The April 11 kidnapping of the priests, nuns and three relatives of one of the priests in the capital of Port-au-Prince is one of the most shocking recent abductions in Haiti, which saw a 200% increase in kidnappings last year,

according to the United Nations. Those kidnapped were identified as nuns Anne-Marie Dorcelus and Agnès Bordeaux, priests Michel Briand, Evens Joseph, Jean-Nicaise Millien, Joël Thomas and Hugues Baptiste and three relatives of another priest. Briand was

identified as French.

One of the relatives was released because she was sick, according to a radio interview broadcast on Monday of a man who claimed to be the leader of the kidnap gang.

The man, who identified himself as Lanmò San Jou of the 400 Mawozo gang, told Radio Mega that the French nationals are among the most important hostages: "If Haiti is like this, it's because of the French."

The alleged gang leader said he wants restitution from France and that he would stop feeding the people he kidnapped. He declined to say how much ransom he was seeking. Church officials who organized the shutdown said Masses would be held on

Wednesday and Thursday and that on Friday, church bells across Haiti would toll for the victims.

"We, the Catholic bishops of Haiti, see with great sorrow that there has been no change in the situation of our brothers and sisters in the hands of the bandits," the Conference of Catholic Bishops said in a Tuesday statement. "Ten days in the hands of kidnappers is too much."

One of the kidnapped priests had been working as a missionary in Haiti since 1985 and was assaulted and shot a couple of years ago, the Rev. Paul Dossous, superior general of the Society of Priests of Saint-Jacques, told Paris-based Franceinfo in an interview published last week. □

LOCAL



Transfer of the 'COVID-19 food aid' program from the Red Cross to the Aruban government

ORANJESTAD - According to one of the requirements for the liquidity support, and as indicated in the Implementation Agenda of the Landspakket Aruba, the government announces that the Country Aruba will, with effect from 1 July 2021, implement the provisional program with regard to social assistance during the COVID-19 crisis will take over.

At the moment, the services in charge of the

implementation plan, in collaboration with the local NGOs, are making final preparations for the transfer to be successful. In concrete terms, this means that the people who depend on the assistance of this provisional program will also receive it from July 1st, 2021.

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes requests, on behalf of the government of Aruba, that all those involved to be patient and stay pending for more information to follow. □



Aruba Health news

ORANJESTAD — In order to be able put more flexible hours and measurements it is extremely important to have the Covid-19 virus under control. Therefore, the Department of Public Health has made it possible for residents to get their Pfizer vaccine faster. The plan is to have 85% of the population vaccinated by mid June 2021. As of today a total of 51.920 person registered for the vaccine of which 17.921 received both dosages already and 26.500 the first dosage and are pending for their second dosage. Here's how the department of Public health is taking action.

Walk-in and vaccination for people over 50 and people who missed their appointment

As of Tuesday, April 20, 2021, citizens of 50 years and older, as well as those who missed their appointment, can walk in and be vaccinated.

All citizens aged 50 or older who have registered and have not yet received an appointment can walk in. Also, all citizens of 50 years or older who have not registered can walk in and get help with registration and will be vaccinated at the same time.

Citizens who already had an appointment and missed it for whatever reason, can walk in non-stop from Monday to Saturday at the Centro Libertador Betico Croes from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. also in the Santa Teresita Center, Monday to Saturday from 8:30 am to 11:30 am and from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Walk-in service is only for the first vaccination. People who have already had their first vaccination should get their second vaccination on their already programmed appointment date.

To speed up your registration, you can register via the Aruba Health App, www.dvg.aw, [www , www.arubacovid19.org](http://www.arubacovid19.org) , or at MFA Paradera and Noord and also at Centrum Santa Teresita in San Nicolas.

Vaccination Marathon on April 24 and 25, 2021

The Department of Public Health reminds everyone that Aruba will realize its first VACCINATION MARATHON this Saturday and Sunday, on April 24 and 25, 2021.

Are you 18 or older and have you not yet been vaccinated?

Then, go to the Vaccination Marathon on April 24th or 25th at Centrum Teresita in San Nicolas, Centro Libertador Betico Croes, Club Don Bosco in Noord or Ritz-Carlton Hotel from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 'NON-STOP'. Do not forget to bring your AZV card.

Note: the vaccination marathon only applies to the first vaccination.q

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Earth week at the Hilton



PALM BEACH — Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino will be celebrating Earth Week this week, a time set aside to appreciate the beautiful planet we live on and give back to the environment.

Resort Team Members will join together in several programs designed to raise awareness of reducing recycling and reusing, with a schedule of entertaining and educational activities. Working with a local company, Fantastic Gardens, the resort will be planting an additional tree on property, a welcome addition to its already lush tropical gardens. In the spirit of gardening, Team Members will be planting and seed-swapping having taken an interest in growing vegetables and fruits since the beginning of last year. Seed and plant swapping will give Team Members an opportunity to acquire plants they don't yet have. Fantastic Gardens will also conduct a Basic Gardening Workshop, in-house, providing hands on practice with plants, fertilizers, soil, pots, and instruction regarding the life cycle of plants.

Additional projects include the launch of a new refillable water station for team members, designed to lower the consumption of single use plastic, and a Clean Your Plate campaign in which the Team Members' cafeteria serves a Waste-Free menu, prepared without bones, shells, or peels, in order to avoid waste of pre and post production.

As the highlight of the week, a Recycled Art Contest, from gathered discarded materials collected by all resort departments, promises to



deliver a fun and innovative art piece to be entered in a competition between departments. The resort wishes to thank Fantastic Gardens Aruba for participating in the week's events. Fantastic Gardens Aruba, since 1983, is the go-to address for anything that grows on the island, sharing passion and love of plants and nature with the Aruban Community to ensure the further green development of the island for the benefit of tomorrow's generations. □

Birds of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation also focusses on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds

on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundation's Facebook page.

Incoming....

A part of a larger flock of ducks landing at one of the 16 new nature areas of Aruba's National Park. 7 White-cheeked Pintails and 1 Blue-winged Teal. Can you find the Blue-winged Teal?

Papiamentu: Pato di aña y Pato moreke.

Netherlands: Bahamapijlstaart en Blauwvleugeltaling.

More than a dozen species of ducks visit Aruba. At least two of them breed in Aruba.

Wing pattern.

A Shoco demonstrating its wing pattern.

The Aruba Burrowing Owl is an endemic subspecies. In 2012 it was declared a National Symbol of Aruba. There are an estimated



200 pairs remaining in Aruba's nature.

Netherlands: Arubaanse Holenuil.

Freedom

A little girl flying with the gulls.

Manifesting her inner child. She is one with Pachima-ma.

So much beauty in Aruba's wildlife. Aruba's to protect. Aruba's to enjoy. □

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Asi es mi Peru launches quality Food Truck at Eagle Beach



EAGLE BEACH — While operating two successful restaurants at Paradise Beach Villas- Eagle Beach, The Kitchen Table (TKT) and Asi es mi Peru (AEMP) who are both under one roof, COVID-19 interrupted operations of both restaurants and each and every restaurant in Aruba in March this year. TKT was closed temporarily,

AEMP kept operating for take out in the weekends, operating lunch and dinner again in the weekends until fully operational in July.

It became clear says owner Roxanna Salinas, "that we would not be able to maintain all of the staff with hotel occupancies of around twenty percent once the

tourists started returning slowly in August." But we saw it as an obligation to maintain all of our staff as one family!

And that's when the idea of extending our services with a food truck was born so we could make sure to keep all of our staff who otherwise would be out of



a job. A perfect food truck with all whistles and bells appeared on the horizon and with permits filed the food truck made her appearance at Eagle Beach at the end of September. Just, 100 yards from the restaurant at the corner of the T-crossing between Paradise Beach Villas and La Cabana. Convenient to offer a large scale of products!

Best ceviche and grilled chicken on the island

Our now famous ceviche, insiders say the best ceviche on the island, is a best seller and our roasted chicken (pollo a la brasa)

are favorite items but hot-dogs, hamburgers, salads, soups and wraps, empanadas and pastechis are just a few of the items offered. Actually, there are no restrictions as the entire Asi es mi Peru menu is available converted from dollars to florins. While most food trucks in Aruba operate in the evening and night the AEMP Food Truck operates from 11.00 am – 9 pm. Every day with the exception of Monday, orders can be called in at +297 592-5699 and picked up at the food truck.

Mi Retiro (My Retirement)

"When I married Roxanna says co-operator Jan van Nes, I knew that the word retirement was not in her vocabulary. Now, a retired hotelier for two years, I know that somewhere down the road there will always be something to do, even when our two restaurants would be operated by a younger generation. With this perspective the Food Truck could be called "Mi Retiro (My Retirement)." For reservations for The Kitchen Table (www.thekitchenableinaruba.com) , Asi es Mi Peru (www.asies-peruenaruba.com) and take-out orders, feel free to call Roxanna at +297 592-5699. We love to welcome you! □



Businesses scramble for help as job openings go unfilled

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It looks like something to celebrate: small businesses posting "Help Wanted" signs as the economy edges toward normalcy. Instead, businesses are having trouble filling the jobs, which in turn hurts their ability to keep up with demand for their products or services.

Owners say that some would-be workers are worried about catching COVID-19 or prefer to live off unemployment benefits that are significantly higher amid the pandemic. Child care is another issue parents aren't able to work when they need to tend to or home-school their children. For some people, a combination of factors go into their decision not to seek work.

When Steve Klatt and Brandon Lapp set up interviews for their restaurant and food truck business, they're lucky if one out of 10 or 15 applicants comes in.

"The people who do show up, all assume their unemployment is running out," says Klatt, whose business, Braised in the South, is located in Johns Island, South Carolina. The maximum weekly unemployment benefits in the state are \$626 including \$300 in federal coronavirus relief payments; in some states, maximum unemployment is over \$700 a week.

Klatt and Lapp need 20 people to run the business well but have only five staffers. Former chefs, the owners and their wives are working in the kitchen and on the truck to keep things running. Klatt and Lapp recently decided to curtail their Sunday hours and close Mondays to give everyone a break.

"The hit to the bottom line will be noticeable, but it's not worth burning out the few awesome people we do have working for us," Klatt says.

Businesses of all sizes are struggling with hiring even with millions of Americans unemployed and as increasing numbers of people get vaccinated and



This photo provided by Hannah Albert on Sept. 23, 2020 shows Steve Klatt, left, and Brandon Lapp, owners of Braised in the South, a Johns Island, S.C., restaurant and food truck business that is having trouble finding workers during the pandemic.

look forward to a more normal life. A Census survey taken in late March shows that 6.3 million didn't seek work because they had to care for a child, and 4.1 million said they feared contracting or spreading the virus.

But smaller companies that often can't offer pay and benefits as generous as larger companies have a tougher time.

"A shortage of talent is nothing new for small businesses, but the circumstances surrounding this shortage are entirely different," says Jill Chapman, a consultant with Insperity, a human resources provider. The National Federation of Independent Business found in a March survey of its own members that 42% had job openings they couldn't fill. Owners cited higher unemployment benefits as one factor. And a study released last month by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that a 10% increase in unemployment benefits during the pandemic led to a 3.6% drop in job applications.

"Unemployment benefits allow workers to be able to wait longer before they take a job, which can make hiring harder," said Ioana Marinescu, a University of Pennsylvania profes-

sor who co-authored the study.

Companies whose work is done inside homes including plumbers, contractors and pest control businesses find many prospective hires are afraid of contracting the virus on a job. Meanwhile, demand for their services is up because there's more wear and tear on houses and apartments as people spend more time at home. At Jake Romano's Ottawa, Ontario, plumbing business, job candidates are gravitating toward commercial plumbing rather than having to visit five to 10 homes a day. Even when Romano finds a good prospect for his company, John the Plumber, he's often disappointed.

"We had a really good applicant, who I found on Facebook. He agreed to come onboard, everything was looking good. I was excited, he was excited. Then, bam! He changed his mind," says Romano, who's looking for two licensed plumbers to add to his current staff of 10.

Economist Joe Brusuelas says child care is another issue that may extend owners' struggles to find workers. "Until the schools are reopened and avenues of child care normalized, small firms in general, as well as food, beverage, lei-

sure and hospitality, in particular, are going to face staffing challenges until later this fall at the earliest," says Brusuelas, chief economist with the consulting firm RSM.

Jillian Melton was laid off from a Seasons 52 restaurant in Memphis, Tennessee, last spring when the pandemic shut the restaurant down. Melton, who had worked at the restaurant for seven years, can't work a regular schedule; she has three children at home from school and she's caring for her 93-year-old grandmother. Babysitters and nurses are in short supply.

Melton says employers need to understand that many workers have compromised immune systems or limited availability because schools and day care centers are closed. Some people, upended by the pandemic, are just looking for new lines of work, she says.

Child care is one reason why the pool of available workers has shrunk dramatically at Let Mommy Sleep, which hires nurses and health aides to provide in-home care for babies and give new mothers a respite. Founder Denise Stern says some of her caregivers want to work overnight and sleep during the day,

but if they have their own children to care for, that's not possible.

Stern also is being hamstrung by concerns about the virus.

"We can't hire candidates with second jobs where exposure might happen, and honestly, a lot of candidates don't want to work in a closed environment where we know transmission happens," Stern says.

Stern has had to turn business away, and so have the owners of seven Let Mommy Sleep franchises around the country. Stern, who works in the Washington, D.C., area, says her revenue is down by half.

Revenue is down 30% at Filter King, based in Miami. Demand for air filters is jumping as people work from home and run their air conditioners more, but owners Mike Jacob and Rick Hoskins need to double their staff of 20 to keep up with orders.

"The unemployment benefits continue and it's hard to get people off the couch and into the warehouse," Jacob says.

But even when people are willing to work, Filter King is at a disadvantage compared to companies that can pay more, Jacob says. He's lost staffers and candidates to a competitor funded by a venture capital firm.

Stonehedge Farms, a popcorn manufacturer in Dover, Pennsylvania, raised its hourly pay to \$13.50 from \$12 in hopes of attracting more workers but co-owners Shannon and Anthony Tsonis haven't been able to find enough people to fill the factory's two shifts. They have 30 staffers and need another 10; the Tsonises and their office staffers have to fill in at the factory.

"This would lead me to believe they are simply applying to meet the (job search) requirements of unemployment, which is frustrating because we need people, and it's frustrating because it's a waste of our time and resources for recruitment," Tsonis says. □

Associated Press

As extreme weather increases, climate misinformation adapts

By DAVID KLEPPER

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) —

Climate scientists have warned for years that a warming planet would cause more extreme storms, like the one that walloped Texas in February, knocking out power and leaving millions in a deep freeze.

Yet as the snow fell and the wind howled, some looked for other explanations for the storm and its resulting power outages. The conservative website The Gateway Pundit made the false claim that President Joe Biden's energy policies somehow prevented Texas plants from generating the power the state needed and "led to Texans literally freezing to death."

The next day, the conspiracy theory website Infowars published a similarly untrue story that was shared 70,000 times on Facebook and Twitter. Four days later, U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colorado, tweeted to her 100,000 followers that Biden's energy policies were "leaving millions of Texans freezing to death."

All those claims were false. In fact, an emergency request granted by the Biden administration gave the state authority to exceed federal environmental limits in order to provide



In this Dec. 3, 2020, file photo, Bruce McDougal watches embers fly over his property as the Bond Fire burns through the Silverado community in Orange County, Calif.

Associated Press

enough power to Texans. To climate scientists and misinformation researchers, claims like these mark an important shift: Instead of focusing on denialism, climate misinformation is getting local, focused on extreme weather events tied to a changing climate such as the Texas storm or recent wildfires that ravaged California and Australia.

"It just isn't credible to deny climate change or the impacts it's having. People see it with their own two eyes," said Penn State University climate scientist

Michael Mann. "So there's a shift in tactics. Now it's softer forms of denial, and efforts to diminish the impacts of climate change." That evolution is evident online. Media intelligence firm Signal Labs analyzed millions of social media posts, news stories and other online content and found that overall, conversations about climate change in the past 12 months peaked during high-profile natural disasters, including the Texas storm and the California wildfires. Overall, online mentions of natural disasters and their relationship to climate change also increased by 27%, Signal found.

Surveys also show that extreme weather is changing people's thinking about climate change. According to a 2019 poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago, nearly 75% of Americans said their opinions about climate change have been influenced by extreme weather in the previous five years.

With about 7 in 10 Americans saying they believe climate change is happening, misinformation

has now shifted from denialism to focus on its real world impacts. In some ways, that's a positive, as it demonstrates increased public understanding of the problem.

But it also creates new opportunities for those who would spread bogus claims.

"We still see claims that global warming doesn't exist, but we also see misinformation about specific areas such as the wind turbines in Texas," said Emmanuel Vincent, director of Science Feedback, a global network of scientists based in France who work to debunk inaccurate claims about climate change. "A lot of the misinformation is more subtle."

Those who still dispute a connection to a changing climate are grasping for increasingly far-fetched explanations. Following the Texas storm, for instance, some claimed the snow was fake and wouldn't burn, or that it was the result of weather control technology used by Biden. Recent California wildfires? While experts say dry and hot conditions are to blame, some, including U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Georgia, have speculated it might

be the work of space lasers.

Such misinformation persists online, despite stated attempts by online platforms to stamp it out. While Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have all removed content spreading misinformation about COVID-19 or the recent U.S. election, critics say they've been less aggressive when it comes to climate information.

A spokesman for Facebook said the platform is doing more than ever to connect users with accurate information about climate change. Its Climate Science Information Center, created last year, is now available in 16 countries and nine languages, and has a new section dedicated to dispelling climate change myths.

YouTube, owned by Google, was singled out as a leading source for climate misinformation by the U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

In a letter to Google, the committee urged the tech giant to do more to combat falsehoods on its platforms. In an emailed statement, YouTube acknowledged the challenge of "drawing the lines between misinformation, political speech, legitimate debate, and opinion."

U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Florida, chairwoman of the House climate committee, told the AP in a statement that groups who oppose meaningful responses to climate change including fossil fuel companies use misinformation to confuse the public. But she said many people aren't buying it.

"It's becoming harder for polluters and their allies to keep standing in the way of climate solutions, which is why they resort to false and harmful misinformation," she said.

"Most Americans, and particularly young Americans, are demanding their representatives take this crisis seriously." □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	2					4		
		1				5		9
9	6				4		8	
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Difficulty Level ★★★★★

4/23

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New data reassuring for COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy

By LINDSEY TANNER
AP Medical Writer

One of the largest reports on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy bolsters evidence that it is safe although the authors say more comprehensive research is needed.

The preliminary results are based on reports from over 35,000 U.S. women who received either the Moderna or Pfizer shots while pregnant. Their rates of miscarriage, premature births and other complications were comparable to those observed in published reports on pregnant women before the pandemic.

The new evidence from researchers at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine. None of the women involved received Johnson & Johnson's one-shot vaccine, which became available after the study, and is now in limbo as U.S. authorities examine reports of blood clots in a handful of women.

Separately, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine on Tuesday endorsed vaccination in pregnancy, based on evi-



In this Thursday, May 7, 2020 file photo, a pregnant woman wearing a face mask and gloves holds her belly as she waits in line for groceries with hundreds during a food pantry sponsored by Healthy Waltham for those in need due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, at St. Mary's Church in Waltham, Mass.

Associated Press

dence it has been evaluating for over a year.

"Everyone, including pregnant women and those seeking to become pregnant, should get a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are safe and effective," the society said in a statement.

A society representative said the group has not evaluated the latest evidence on Johnson & Johnson's vaccine.

An American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists representative said the CDC report is promising but that longer-term follow-up is needed. That group has said previously that COVID-19 vaccination should be available to pregnant women and to

those who are breastfeeding, and many pregnant U.S. women have chosen to be vaccinated.

Although pregnant women were excluded from studies that led to emergency authorization for the vaccines, evidence showed no harms in women who were unknowingly pregnant when they enrolled.

Dr. Laura Riley, ob-gyn chair at New York's Weill Cornell Medicine, said the new results are reassuring.

"It is great to have data to share with our patients who continue to weigh the risks and benefits of vaccination," she said. "They know the potential complications of COVID infection in pregnancy and now there is some safety data in

human pregnancies."

Pregnant women who become infected with the coronavirus face elevated risks for complications including intensive-care hospitalization, premature births and death.

The study authors, led by the CDC's Dr. Tom Shimabukuro, said continued monitoring and more evidence is needed including on women who get COVID-19 vaccinations in the early stages of pregnancy. □



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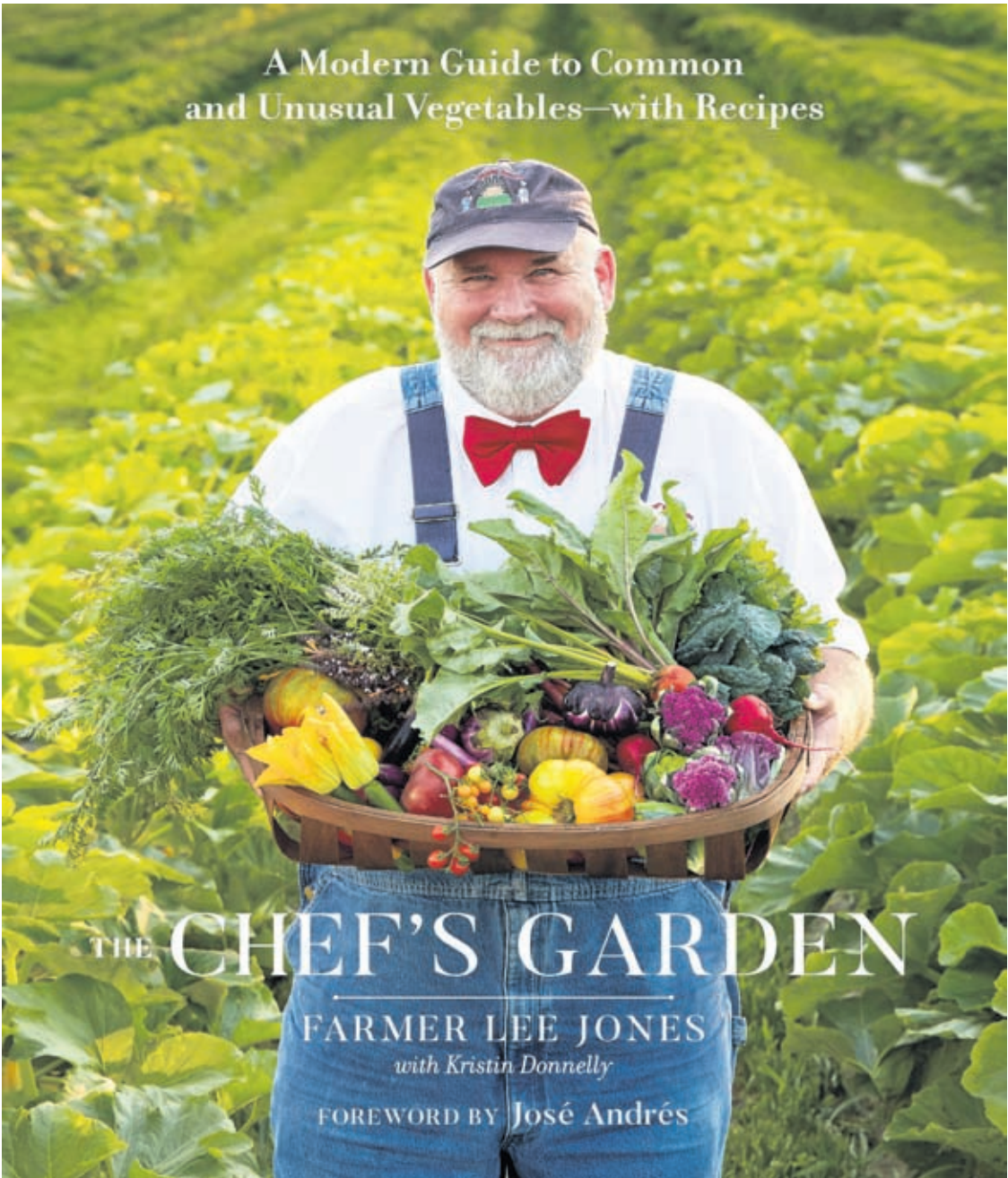


facebook.com/arubatoday/

A farmer to chefs reveals his deep vegetable knowledge

By MARK KENNEDY
AP Entertainment Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Despite thousands of years of humans working the soil, there are still things to learn. Just ask Farmer Lee Jones about the beet leaves. The Ohio-based farmer had planted too many beets and the surplus was dumped in a pile in a cooler. He returned later to find that when he dug below the first layer, to where the beets got no light exposure, beautiful leaves were growing out of the vegetable in the dark. "It's a yellow leaf with red veins. And it's one of the sexiest things that you can imagine," he says. "We're like, 'Holy smokes, this is nicer than anything we grew on purpose!'" You might not find plants particularly sexy until you speak to Jones and catch his infectious enthusiasm for farming. He's a relentless experimenter, willing to try new techniques, new ideas and new flavors. "There are literally thousands of plants and vegetables to be explored," he says. "We have a saying that we try and work in harmony with Mother Nature rather than trying to outsmart her."

Jones' deep knowledge about vegetables and growing them is soon available via "The Chef's Garden: A Modern Guide to Common and Unusual Vegetables — with Recipes." The 640-page handsome book is equal parts vegetable reference bible, family memoir and recipe collection. It comes out April 27. "We try in the book to really look for different ways to be able to utilize plants in America. We kind of think one-dimensionally," he says. "We do bone marrow. Why can't we do vegetable marrow?" Jones is the face of The Chef's Garden, a sustainable, 350-acre family farm in Huron that provides chefs worldwide with seasonal specialty vegetables, microgreens, herbs and edible flowers. Name a starry chef and



This cover image released by shows "The Chef's Garden: A Modern Guide to Common and Unusual Vegetables — with Recipes" by Farmer Lee Jones.

there's a good chance they've done business with The Chef's Garden: José Andrés, Alain Ducasse, Daniel Boulud, Thomas Keller and Ferran Adrià, among them. With his welcoming air and signature denim bib overalls and red bow tie, Jones has become something of a celebrity, too. The Chef's Garden grows 700 kinds of vegetables, with 150 to 200 more in trials. There's a lab where scientists analyze the soil and seeds, and there's also the Culinary Vegetable Institute, which attracts 600 visiting chefs a year to share their knowledge and cook together. Readers of the book will find new ways to prepare vegetables, from celery root to cauliflower, and learn about more unusual ingredients like carrot

seeds, knotweed and radish seed pods. "For several thousand years, we always ate only the top of the carrot plant. It's only been in the last few hundred years that we started eating the bottom of the carrot. Now nobody eats the top," Jones says. Jones' farm is surrounded by 5,000-acre commercial farms, and he does things differently: Instead of chemicals, he uses 15 species of cover crop to replenish the soil. He argues that American farmers have lost their way regarding food and health. "I don't knock the other farmers. They're following the model that exists and that's to keep the costs as low as possible and the tons per acre as high as possible. It's not about the integrity of the plant. It's about the tons per acre,"

he says. "We're a bunch of odd ducks out here, for sure." Above all, Jones emphasizes taste and minimizing waste. He looks to Europeans, who learned over centuries of struggle with food insecurity to use every part of their animals. Take oxtail, a peasant food for years. "They figured out great ways to make good dishes with the flavor of the oxtail. And then Thomas Keller comes over here and puts an oxtail on a plate and it's 90 bucks." Jones wants to showcase vegetables, and the book offers attractive and tasty options, from Butter-Poached Squash with Hemp Seed and Coriander to Potato Pierogi with Caramelized Onion Chips. The book has a forward written by Andres and is co-written with Kristin Don-

nnelly, with recipes by Jamie Simpson. Lucia Watson, the book's editor for Avery, says it is timely. "Vegetables are the center of our plate more and more. And it is kind of where all of the exciting cooking is coming from — experimenting with vegetables," she says. "This gives home cooks an incredible window into that and an incredible resource. It introduces them to vegetables that they may not have heard of before, but they see at their farmer's market and think, 'What if I brought that home? What would I do with it?' And it also makes them look at vegetables that they've taken for granted." Jones got his love of farming from his dad and keeps a foot in the past — he admires what farmers before him accomplished and reveres old farm machinery — as well as embracing modern technology for things like crop analysis and distribution.

"My dad had a saying that the only thing we're trying to do is get as good as the growers were 100 years ago. It was pre-chemical, pre-synthetic fertilizer, rotating the land, rebuilding the soil," he says. COVID-19 was a wake-up call for Jones to diversify since The Chef's Kitchen found its links to chefs and cruise lines severed when those business shuttered. The farm has since pivoted to nationwide home delivery and opened a farmer's market while it waits for restaurants to rebound. But Jones, ever the optimist, sees a silver lining even in a pandemic: There has been a surge of people interested in growing their own food and planting vegetables. □

5	2	8	9	1	3	4	7	6
3	4	1	8	7	6	5	2	9
9	6	7	5	2	4	1	8	3
2	5	6	7	3	9	8	1	4
8	7	3	4	5	1	6	9	2
1	9	4	2	6	8	3	5	7
7	8	9	3	4	5	2	6	1
4	1	5	6	9	2	7	3	8
6	3	2	1	8	7	9	4	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Suns top 76ers 116-113, improve NBA-best road record to 19-7

By The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Chris Paul scored 28 points, Devin Booker had 19 and Mikal Bridges 18 to lead the Phoenix Suns to a 116-113 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Wednesday night.

Joel Embiid, who had 38 points and 17 rebounds, heaved a full-court shot at the horn that rattled around the rim and put the All-Star center on his back in disbelief over the near-make.

No matter, the Suns walked off winners on the road for the second time this week against one of the top teams in the East. They are an NBA-best 19-7 on the road and second overall behind Utah at 42-16.

Paul hit five 3s and Bridges, a former Villanova stand-out, continued to haunt the Sixers three years after an ill-fated draft-night deal. The Sixers selected Bridges with the 10th overall pick in 2018 — a feel-good story because of the Nova connection and his mother worked for the 76ers' parent company.

Zhaire played only 13 NBA games and is out of the league while Bridges turned into a breakout star for the blossoming Suns.

The Sixers again played without starters Ben Simmons (unspecified illness) and Tobias Harris (right knee). Seth Curry also missed the game with a left hip flexor.

The Suns were coming off an overtime win in Milwaukee to open their five-game trip.

KNICKS 137, HAWKS 127, OT
NEW YORK (AP) — Julius Randle had 40 points and 10 rebounds and New York beat Atlanta in overtime for its eighth straight victory.

Randle's driving layup with eight seconds left in regulation gave New York a 122-119 lead, but Bogdan Bogdanovic hit a 3-pointer with 6.2 seconds left to send the game into overtime.

The Knicks scored the first 10 points of the extra session.

Derrick Rose and Immanuel Quickley each scored 20 points for New York.



Phoenix Suns' Devin Booker, left, tries to get a shot past Philadelphia 76ers' Matisse Thybulle during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, April 21, 2021, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

Trae Young had 20 points and 14 assists for the Hawks, but left the game with 1:13 remaining in the third quarter after suffering an ankle injury. He did not return.

Chris Capela had 25 points and 22 rebounds for Atlanta.

JAZZ 12, ROCKETS 89

HOUSTON (AP) — Jordan Clarkson scored 22 points, Joe Ingles had 21 and the NBA-leading Utah Jazz beat the Houston Rockets 112-89 on Wednesday night.

The Jazz have won four of their last five games. The 23-point margin was Utah's most-lopsided victory over Houston since a 118-91 blowout Dec. 6, 2018.

Rudy Gobert had 19 points, 18 rebounds and two blocks for Utah.

John Wall led Houston with 21 points and six assists. The Rockets have lost seven of their last eight and 12 of their last 14. Houston is 4-33 since Feb. 4.

CLIPPERS 117, GRIZZLIES 105

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Luke Kennard scored a season-high 28 points and short-handed Los Angeles overcame an 18-point, first-quarter deficit to beat Memphis.

Marcus Morris added 25 points and Terance Mann had 19 points in helping the Clippers win their third in a row and 10th in 11 games

despite being without starters Kawhi Leonard (sore foot), Paul George and Reggie Jackson, who both rested.

Ja Morant led Memphis with 22 points.

Jaren Jackson Jr. made his season debut for the Grizzlies, with 15 points and eight rebounds to go with five fouls off the bench. He'd been out since August after having surgery on his left meniscus and missing the first 56 games.

WIZARDS 118, WARRIORS 114

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stephen Curry had his first rough night for Golden State in a month, and Bradley Beal rallied Washington in the fourth quarter for its season-best sixth straight victory.

Coming off a historic 11-game stretch in which he made 78 3-pointers and surpassed Beal as the NBA's scoring leader, Curry scored 18 points on 7-of-25 shooting, including 2 of 14 on 3s.

Beal scored 29 points in his Wizards' first home game with fans in more than a year.

Former Wizard Kelly Oubre Jr. led Golden State with 24 points.

NUGGETS 106, TRAIL BLAZERS 105

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Nikola Jokic scored 25

points and made three key free throws down the stretch to help Denver beat Portland.

Michael Porter Jr. added 17 points, all in the opening quarter, and the Nuggets won their fourth straight.

Damian Lillard scored 22 points for Portland. The Trail Blazers lost their third straight.

RAPTORS 114, NETS 103

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Pascal Siakam had 27 points and nine rebounds, OG Anunoby scored 25 points and Toronto beat Brooklyn for its fourth straight victory.

Kyrie Irving had 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, and Bruce Brown added 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Nets forward F Kevin Durant missed his second game after aggravating a thigh injury Sunday at Miami.

PACERS 122, THUNDER 116

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Malcolm Brogdon had 29 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists, and Caris LeVert scored 28 points and severely short-handed Indiana beat Oklahoma City. Indiana snapped a three-game losing streak despite playing without anyone taller than 6-foot-7. Indiana was missing three starters — two-time All-Star forward Domantas Sabonis, center Myles Turner and forward T.J. Warren — and four

backups.

Darius Bazley matched his career high with 26 points for Oklahoma City. The Thunder have lost 12 in a row.

MAVERICKS 127, PISTONS 117

DALLAS (AP) — Luka Dončić had 30 points and 10 rebounds, Kristaps Porziņģis added 19 points and seven boards and Dallas beat Detroit to stop a four-game home losing streak.

Dončić finished with nine assists, just missing his 10th triple-double of the season. Jalen Brunson scored 18 of his 20 points in the first half of a game that was supposed to be played Feb. 17 but was postponed because of severe winter weather in Texas.

Jerami Grant scored 26 points and Cory Joseph added 24 for the Pistons.

CAVALIERS 121, BULLS 105

CLEVELAND (AP) — Collin Sexton scored 30 points, Darius Garland added 25 and Cleveland beat Chicago to snap a five-game home losing streak.

Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff was not at the game for personal reasons, but is expected to return to the bench Friday. Assistant coach Greg Buckner filled in for his longtime friend and colleague.

Kevin Love added 15 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland. Lauri Markkanen scored 14 of his 16 points in the second half for Chicago.

KINGS 128, TIMBERWOLVES 124

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Buddy Hield hit a 3-pointer with 8.8 seconds remaining and scored 29 points in Sacramento's victory over Minnesota.

Moments after Minnesota's D'Angelo Russell missed from above the arc, Hield came back the other way and hit his seventh 3 of the game to help Sacramento avoid being swept in the three-game season series.

De'Aaron Fox had 30 points, seven assists and five rebounds for the Kings. Harrison Barnes added 22 points and seven assists. Karl-Anthony Towns scored 26 points for Minnesota. □

Olympic athletes promised legal support if they protest

By **GRAHAM DUNBAR**

GENEVA (AP) — Athletes who make political or social justice protests at the Tokyo Olympics were promised legal support Thursday by a global union and an activist group in Germany.

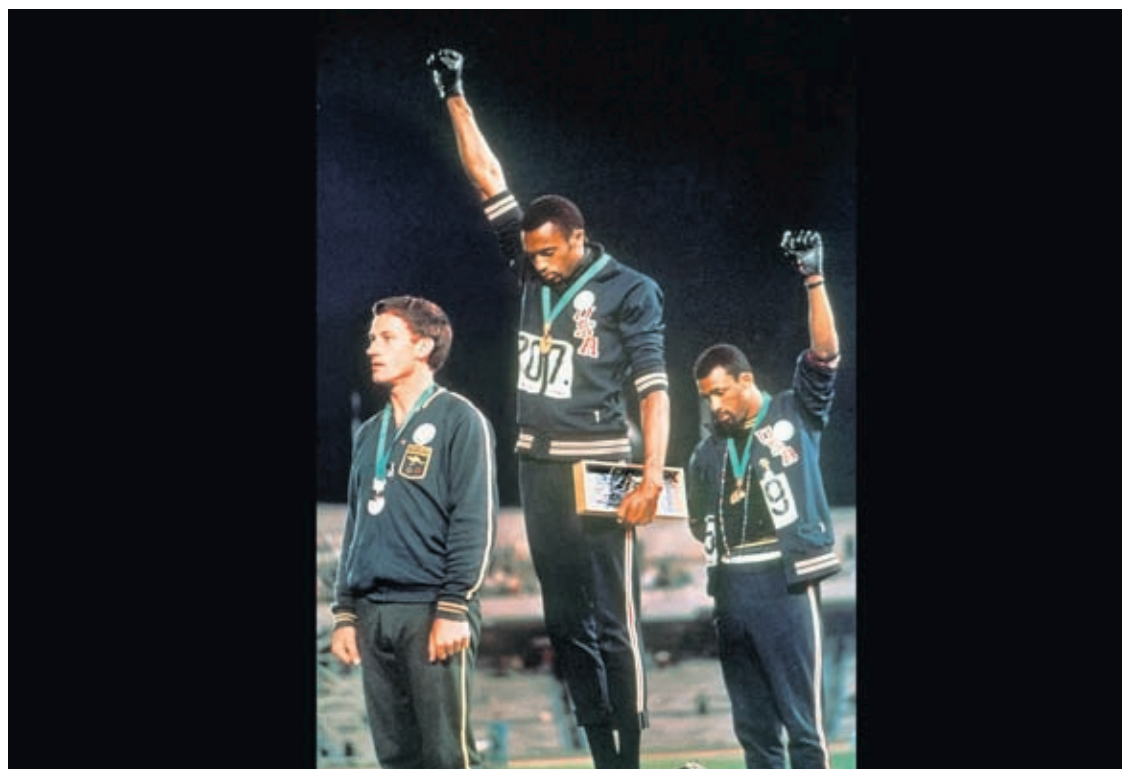
The pledges came one day after the International Olympic Committee confirmed its long-standing ban on "demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda" on the field of play, medal podiums or official ceremonies.

Raising a fist or kneeling for a national anthem could lead to punishment from the IOC. The Olympic body's legal commission should clarify what kind of punishment before this year's games, which open on July 23.

The IOC also said that slogans such as "Black Lives Matter" will not be allowed on athlete apparel at Olympic venues, though it approved using the words "peace," "respect," "solidarity," "inclusion" and "equality" on T-shirts.

The IOC's athletes' commission cited support to uphold Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter from more than two-thirds of about 3,500 replies from consulting athlete groups.

"This is precisely the outcome we expected," said Brendan Schwab, execu-



In this Oct. 16, 1968 file photo, U.S. athletes Tommie Smith, center, and John Carlos raise their gloved fists after Smith received the gold and Carlos the bronze for the 200 meter run at the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City.

Associated Press

tive director of the World Players Association union. "The Olympic movement doesn't understand its own history better than the athletes."

Speaking to The Associated Press in a telephone interview from Australia, Schwab said "Any athlete sanctioned at the Tokyo Olympics will have the full backing of the World Players."

The independent group representing German athletes pledged legal back-

ing for its national team. "Should German athletes decide to peacefully stand up for fundamental values such as fighting racism during the Olympic Games, they can rely on the legal support of Athleten Deutschland," Johannes Herber, the group's chief executive, said in a statement.

In a statement, another athlete group, Global Athlete, encouraged athletes to "not allow outdated 'sports rules' to supersede

your basic human rights." It said the survey's methods were flawed.

"These types of surveys only empower the majority when it is the minority that want and need to be heard," said Ireland's Caradh O'Donovan, a karate athlete who helped start Global Athlete.

While the IOC said cases would each be judged on merits, athletes who follow the iconic salutes by American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the

1968 Mexico City Olympics still could be sent home.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee inducted Smith and Carlos into its Hall of Fame in 2019. It pledged in December not to take action against athletes protesting at their Olympic trials for Tokyo. On Thursday, it released a statement saying its plans to update its recently released policy over protests in response to the IOC's decision have not changed.

"Nor has our commitment to elevating athlete expression and the voices of marginalized populations everywhere in support of racial and social justice," CEO Sarah Hirshland said.

Both Schwab and Herber said minorities would be protected from discrimination if the IOC recognized the human rights of athletes to express themselves. The IOC erred by trying to regulate the place where a protest might take place instead of the statement's content, Schwab said, adding athletes' freedom of expression in Olympic venues "should be respected, protected and indeed promoted."

Athletes breaching Rule 50 can be sanctioned by three bodies: the IOC, their sport's governing body, and their national Olympic committee (NOC). □

Say Hey, kid! Willie Mays wins lifetime achievement award



Willie Mays smiles prior to a baseball game between the New York Mets and the San Francisco Giants in San Francisco, in this Friday, Aug. 19, 2016, file photo.

Associated Press

By **MIKE FITZPATRICK**

NEW YORK (AP) — Willie Mays has won the inaugural Lifetime Achievement

Award presented by Baseball Digest.

The Hall of Fame center fielder was honored Thurs-

day with a new accolade to be given annually recognizing a living individual who has made "significant contributions to the national game."

Mays, who turns 90 on May 6, was chosen over five other finalists in voting by a panel of longtime baseball writers, broadcasters, historians and executives.

The Say Hey Kid appears on the cover of Baseball Digest for the fourth time.

"I never worried about personal awards. I worried about winning," Mays said in a news release. "But to be honored with this Lifetime Achievement Award, that's a great honor, especially with all the other

great names (considered). All deserving. It's a sports award, it's a baseball award, but it's much more. It's about all the things you do. For me, it's about helping kids and making sure they're taken care of because so many people took care of me in my life." Mays made 24 All-Star teams and won two NL MVP awards and 12 Gold Gloves during his dazzling career from 1951-73. He moved with the Giants from New York to San Francisco, then finished up with two seasons back in the Big Apple playing for the Mets. He ranks sixth on the career chart with 660 home runs.

Also selected as finalists were Hank Aaron, Roland Hemond, Rachel Robinson, Vin Scully and Joe Torre.

"Baseball Digest was honored to cover and celebrate Willie Mays for the duration of his incredible career and we are equally honored to celebrate an entire lifetime of contributions to baseball," said Norman Jacobs, publisher since 1969. "Just as he thrilled us during a Hall of Fame playing career that spanned four decades, Willie has exemplified the best qualities of our game and our country in the nearly 50 years since his retirement." □